

**IN THE SPECIFICATION:**

Please **amend the paragraph beginning on page 9, line 15, and ending on page 10, line 19, as follows:**

a1 Referring to NE 108, receiver 210 receives the encoded data stream from the working link 216 and prepares the encoded data stream for decoding using conventional techniques. In one embodiment, receiver 210 is adapted to convert data link voltages to, for example, TTL/MOS compatible, voltages for use with a phase locked loop coupled to a clock for generating a signal synchronized with the data stream. The synchronized signal can be coupled to a logic sequencer (not shown) in decoder 212 for recognizing frame or byte boundaries and for implementing a decoding algorithm compatible with the encoding algorithm to detect transmission code violations and provide error correction (See see, e.g., U.S. Patent No. 5,740,186). Once decoder 212 has synchronized and decoded the encoded data stream, the monitor module 214 counts a number of transmission code violations and computes a performance metric for link 216 based on the count. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the performance metric is a rate of transmission code violations RE. The error rate RE is computed by dividing the total number of transmission code violations occurring over a predetermined period of time or, alternatively, over a predetermined

a number of data frames. If the performance metric indicates that the working link 216 has failed or provides unacceptably degraded performance, a switch signal is sent from module 214 to switch 206 via return path 220. Upon receipt of the switch signal from module 214, switch 206 switches or otherwise transfers the data stream to protection link 218. A preferred embodiment of the switch 206 can include a multiplexer (not shown) coupled to a control module (not shown) for controlling the switching of traffic between links 216 and 218 in response to the switch signal using conventional techniques.

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